



OHIO CHAMBER CHAMPIONS

American Electric Power
The Andersons
Anthem
Arconic
AT&T
CareWorks
CareWorksComp

Charter Communications
Columbia Gas of Ohio
Commercial Vehicle Group
FirstEnergy Corp.
General Electric
Grange Insurance Companies
Gulfport Energy Corporation

Marathon Petroleum Company
Mercy Health
Nationwide
Northeast Ohio Medical University
Penn National Gaming, Inc.
Petland, Inc.
Plante Moran PLLC

Procter & Gamble Co.
Reliable Staffing Services LLC
Squire Patton Boggs LLP
U.S. Bank
UnitedHealthcare
Vistra Energy
Zaino Hall & Farrin

November 19, 2019

Representative Tom Brinkman
Chairman, Ohio House Insurance Committee
77 S. High St., 11th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Brinkman & Members of the Ohio House Insurance Committee,

The Ohio Chamber supports the substitute version of HB 81 accepted by the Ohio House Insurance Committee today.

With these changes, we believe substitute HB 81 will improve upon an already strong Ohio's workers' compensation system. Workplaces in the Buckeye State are safer due to workplace safety programs, modern manufacturing processes, and safer equipment which has led to fewer injuries and workers' compensation claims. Additionally, employer premiums are at their lowest level in at least forty years with premium reductions of twenty percent this year and twelve percent the year prior.

The reforms included in substitute HB 81 will build upon the Bureau's progress by making reasonable and incremental changes to our workers' compensation laws. These reforms include:

- Amending the commencement of the continuing jurisdiction for the Bureau and Industrial Commission to the date an injured worker last received medical treatment. This change will lead to more uniformity and predictability for the system since claims will no longer be kept open for an unnecessary period of time due to medical billing practices.
- Aligning the statute of limitation for VSSR claims with the statute of limitation changes made in the workers' compensation budget from the prior General Assembly. This alignment will bring more consistency to Ohio's workers' compensation law.
- Codifying the doctrine of voluntary abandonment to assure benefits are only paid when an individual's lost wage is the direct result of a workplace injury. The Ohio Chamber would prefer language regarding the intent of the General Assembly to supersede previous judicial decision on voluntary abandonment be moved to uncodified law or struck from the bill. However, we continue to support substitute HB 81 because codifying the voluntary abandonment doctrine is an important public policy priority of the Chamber.

- Modifying the procedures for final settlement agreements to assure employers who have an interest in the claim will retain their right to object to settlement agreements.

We thank the Chairman, other committee members, and all stakeholders who worked with us to develop these reforms. Substitute HB 81, if enacted, will keep Ohio's workers' compensation system moving in the right direction.

The Ohio Chamber urges your favorable consideration of substitute HB 81.

Sincerely,



Kevin Shimp, Esq.
Director, Labor & Legal Affairs
Ohio Chamber of Commerce